

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PROVIDING FOR A RESOLUTION WITH RESPECT TO THE UNRESOLVED DISPUTES BETWEEN CERTAIN RAILROADS REPRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL CARRIERS' CONFERENCE COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL RAILWAY LABOR CONFERENCE AND CERTAIN OF THEIR EMPLOYEES

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, we're here today to end three years of contract negotiations between the freight railroads and their workforce.

For three years, more than 115,000 essential railroad employees have worked without a new contract or a pay raise, all the while enduring a global pandemic and new work rules that further erode their quality of life.

We shouldn't be here today. But the freight railroads brought us here, and now we have to act.

This all could have been avoided had the railroads been willing to provide their employees with a basic protection and what so many Americans already have: paid sick time.

While 75 percent of private industry workers have paid sick time, more than 100,000 railroad employees who work 24/7 operations in all types of weather don't have a single day of paid sick time. And, let's be clear, it's not because the Class I railroads can't afford it.

In the last three years, five of the Class I railroad CEOs were paid more than \$200 million. One of the CEOs made 144 times what the average railroad worker makes. Since 2010, the seven Class I railroads spent \$230 billion to line the pockets of their owners and shareholders through stock buybacks and dividends. That includes the \$26 billion they sent to shareholders in 2021, on top of \$29 billion they reported in profits.

The railroad CEOs—who I'm sure have paid sick leave—are watching their record profits soar, while worrying that their stock prices may drop slightly if they give their workers paid sick leave. Why? Thanks to the vultures on Wall Street, the seven Class I railroads have all implemented so-called precision scheduled railroading—or PSR—an operating strategy that focuses on cutting costs in order to increase profits, which are returned to shareholders.

In implementing PSR, the seven Class I railroads have cut their workforces so deeply—by nearly one-third—that it has significantly impacted service. While the railroads were dithering on their contract negotiations, railroad shippers, including the agricultural, energy, and construction industries—have all attested to how these workforce impacts have contributed to delayed shipments, disruptions to business, and extra shipping costs that get passed on to consumers.

And what has been the railroads' solution to these self-imposed wounds? To force their remaining employees to work harder and longer, and unilaterally impose harsh attendance policies that penalize workers if they have the audacity to call in sick. This is an industry where an inch in the wrong direction can cost you your life or limb—yet the railroads are incentivizing people to come to work sick. It's as dangerous as it is unconscionable.

The railroads argued to the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) that their record profits were not due to “any contributions by labor.” Despite a 75 percent decrease in worker-hours and a 602 percent increase in worker-hour productivity, the railroads argued that productivity was not the result of labor and they claimed that their employees are not overworked or fatigued. However, hour-of-service violations have increased by 60 percent over the last decade. It's 2022, but the robber barons are back.

We're here today because we recognize what makes this country run. It's frontline workers. Without them, just under one third of our country's freight would sit idle. We know the current conditions cannot continue—because without improvements to their ability to reliably spend time with family, be sick without punishment, schedule a doctor appointment, or plan a vacation, railroad workers will continue to leave this industry. And when the best of our essential workers leave, we all suffer. I believe it's well past time that these workers have paid sick leave and it's something the railroads can easily afford.

In 2021 the seven Class I railroads could have paid for their workers to have seven days of paid sick leave by spending just 6/10 of a penny for every dollar they reported in profit and shareholder returns. These highly compensated railroad CEOs should not be opposed to paid sick days for their front-line employees—employees who are responsible for their very success.

The reality is that the robber barons are nothing without the labor of their employees, who deserve better. But recognizing that the parties are no closer to a solution today than they were three years ago, and that railroad workers make this country run, the House will consider this joint resolution to bring an end to this fight in its current form, lock in the tentative agreements that provide historic pay increases, guarantee reimbursement for work expenses, and prevent a massive disruption to our economy that would hurt millions of working people and their families.

I will proudly vote to lock in the tentative agreements and provide railroaders seven paid sick days. The CEOs can take a shift in the rail yard to cover them.

RECOGNIZING DISTRICT 10 COMMISSIONER JAVIER SOUTO FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY CAREER IN PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. CARLOS A. GIMENEZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 1, 2022

Mr. GIMENEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Miami-Dade County Commissioner Javier D. Souto for his exemplary public service to the Miami community. Since his election to the County Board of Commissioners in April 1993, Senator Souto has served District 10—which includes portions of Kendall, Westchester, and Fontainebleau—with distinction for over 29 years. Before that, he was elected twice to the Florida Senate.

Senator Souto's work on behalf of his constituents has been wide-ranging and comprehensive. His passion for our parks and places that bring people together is truly inspiring. He has built a legacy of helping others in need and fighting against the brutal dictatorship of the Castro regime in Cuba. Commissioner Souto is a veteran of the Bay of Pigs Invasion and his contributions to the Cuban exile community are immeasurable.

I had the pleasure of serving as County Commissioner and then Mayor of Miami-Dade County, where I worked with Senator Souto extensively and witnessed firsthand his hard work and determination. His love for Miami is evident through his life of dedication to its people. It is my deep pleasure to honor Senator Souto as he retires from the Board of Commissioners, and I wish him all the very best.

HONORING MICHAEL POWERS,
PRESIDENT OF THE ARC OF THE
OZARKS

HON. BILLY LONG

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 1, 2022

Mr. LONG. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Michael Powers, President of The Arc of the Ozarks.

Michael Powers, an advocate, and influencer has been a leader in the disability community for the past 36 years. With a master's in clinical psychology, he has spent his life serving his community, especially people with disabilities. He is currently the President/CEO of The Arc of the Ozarks located in Springfield, Missouri. He started his career at The Arc of the Ozarks, in 1992 as the Director of Programs and has spent the past thirty years with The Arc committed to the needs of people with disabilities. He has been instrumental in the creation of innovative programs like Renovations, which is the first program of its kind in Missouri for individuals with dual diagnosis. His influence has elevated The Arc

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.